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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the concurrent validity of the Brief Mini Markers Inventory. The 40-item Mini Markers scale and a 15-item situational response questionnaire were administered to a sample of college students. It was hypothesized that scores on the Mini Marker factors would correlate highly with responses to situations tapping the relevant factors of personality. Results reveal that although the five personality factors are conceptualized as being largely discrete, independent dimensions, in this sample significant overlap among these dimensions was noted. This may reflect an actual lack of orthogonality, or may be attributable to response biases among the respondents in this study. The concurrent validity of the Mini Markers personality questionnaire was affirmed for Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness. The concurrent validities for the Intelligence and Neuroticism factors were not established so convincingly by this data. (Contains 26 references.) (GCP)

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College students' social and academic behaviors and scores on the five factors:

Are personality measures predictive of campus functioning?

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2003

INTRODUCTION

Francis Galton proposed that the most important individual differences in human transactions would come to be encoded as single terms in some, if not all, world languages. This prediction is known as the lexical hypothesis (Galton, 1884). Galton's predictions were affirmed by linguists who discovered thousands of adjectives describing personality characteristic in various languages (Allport and Odbert, 1936).

In order to reduce the redundant lists of personality traits obtained through such analysis of the English language, many psychologists have used factor analysis to distill the core, basic elements of personality. In their 1934 study, Guilford & Guilford were the first to use the factor analysis approach with self-report questionnaires and adjective check-lists. Their work included a factor analysis on introversion-extraversion, which yielded four scales of introversion-extroversion: social introversion-extroversion, emotional introversion-extroversion, impulsiveness, and interest in self. After Thurstone (1934) refined factor analytic techniques, Guilford and Guilford (1936) reassessed their previous findings. Their new analyses yielded five factors: social introversion, emotionality, dominance, rhythmia, and thinking introversion. Allport and Odbert (1936) also factor analyzed personality adjectives. They conducted a study designed to assess the interrelationships among personalty-relevant adjectives. Their initial list of 18,000 adjectives was shortened to 4,500 terms. Out of the 4,500 terms identified by Allport and Odbert, Cattell used 35 of them in his own study (Cattell 1943.). Cattell used factor analytic techniques to shorten the list further to 12 factors. Although Cattell was not an advocate of the Big-Five Factor model of personality, his work was instrumental in the evolution of this model.

Those most associated with the development of the Big-Five Factor model of personality are Paul T. Costa and Robert R. McCrae (1985). Their initial attempts to identify the most basic elements of personality yielded three factors, assessed through the NEO-PI (neuroticism,

extroversion, openness-personality inventory) (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Further study revealed the existence of two additional core factors: agreeableness, and conscientiousness (McCrae & Costa, 1987). The addition of these new variables yielded the Big-Five factors currently emphasized by trait researchers.

The quest to find simple universal words to describe personality traits was important to those involved with personality research. Many wanted basic terms that everyone could use as a foundation for describing the human personality. Thus, there were several psychologists who rejoiced at the notion of the Big Five. These advocates support this model and use these five factors to organize their conceptualizing.

However, there are others who are doubtful about the adequacy of this five factor model. In John Block's (1990) critique of the Big Five, he discusses his objections to the Big Five factor model. One of Block's first problems involves the idea of establishing a set of related words to describe personality scientifically. His review of the history of the Big Five suggests that the terms are not orthogonal when heterogeneous subjects are tested. Block also believes that McCrae & Costa and Goldberg use terms inconsistently (e.g., extroversion and agreeableness). Block also disagrees with the use of factor analysis as the means for establishing the Big Five. Block's critique of the Big Five creates some doubt about the validity of these orthogonal factors. Block suggests that the Big Five factors require additional validation before they are adopted universally (Block 1990).

Several psychologists have performed follow up studies, some yielding promising support for the Big Five. The five broad orthogonal factors, known as the Big Five, have been used by many researchers to distinguish phenotypic personality variations (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990, 1993b; John, 1990; Ostendorf, 1990a; cf. McCrae & Costa, 1987). These factors – Extraversion (Factor I), Agreeableness (Factor II), Conscientiousness (Factor III), Emotional Stability (Factor IV), and Intellect-Imagination (V) – have emerged independently in 'lexical' studies of the factor structure of adjectival disposition descriptors within a number of languages, including English (Goldberg, 1990; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996a), German (Ostendorf, 1990a), Dutch (1990a), Czech (De Raad, Hendriks, & Hofstee, 1992), Polish (Szarota, 1996) and Russian (Shmelyov & Pokhil'ko, 1993). Additional studies in Spanish (Benet-Martinez & Waller, 1997), Hungarian (Szimark & De Raad, 1994), and Filipino (Church, Reyes, Katigbak, & Grimm, 1997) have produced factor solutions that are highly compatible with the Big Five, especially the first three factors.

In 1999, Saucier, Gerard, Ostendorf, and Fritz examined the notion that the ways in which people vary might be viewed either from a perspective of a few independent, broad bandwidth constructs or from the perspective of a larger number of more specific but not entirely independent constructs (lower level oblique factors). Though the Big Five factors provide parsimony, they are arguably composed of many subvariables and can possess definitional ambiguity. Different psychological meanings can be ascribed to each of the Big Five factors (Block, 1995; John, 1990). Some maintain that the identification of specific subcomponents of the Big Five can help to clarify the conceptualizations of the broader factors. A representation combining broad and narrow constructs might offer improvements in both efficiency and fidelity. Another possible benefit might entail an increase in predictive validity: a few aggregated subcomponents are likely to predict more powerfully than the single broad factor into which they are agglomerated.

In the first part of a study done by Saucier, Gerard, Ostendorf, and Fritz. (1999), a basis for discovering meaningful personality factors was established by defining relatively

representative sets of personality adjectives. Then, specific subcomponents of the broad factors were identified; beginning with factors whose robustness is well established (the Big Five). To ensure robustness, analyses were conducted in two different samples from two different countries in two different languages.

The Big Five were used to identify subcomponents, due to the array of evidence supporting the model. In the American data set, the same data sets used by Goldberg (1990, Study 2, Samples A and C) were used to derive the Big Five clusters. Three hundred twenty college students described themselves using a 587-adjective inventory with a 7-point response scale. Three hundred sixteen of these students used the same inventory to describe someone of their same sex and approximate age they knew well and liked. The self-ratings and peer-ratings were then pooled to form a large, single sample of 636. For the analysis, the original set of 587 adjectives was reduced to 500 by eliminating 47 'amplification' terms, 22 peripheral terms added to the set at a late stage, and 18 remaining terms with the lowest means in familiarity ratings (Saucier 1997). Factor scores from Goldberg's (1992) 100 unipolar Big Five markers provided coordinates for the Big Five personality factors in this data set.

For the German data set, Ostendorf's (1990a) data sets were used. Voluntary participants included 170 men and 239 women; their average age was 33 years (range: 15 to 81 years). Each participant was sent an inventory of 830 adjectives for self-description. A second copy of the inventory was included for each participant to pass along to one or more acquaintances or friends who would describe the target participant and mail the form back to the researcher. Peer-rating forms were returned for 394 of the target participants. The self-ratings and acquaintance ratings were pooled for a larger sample of 775. One hundred thirty-two adjectives were added to Ostendorf's (1990a) original 430 prototypical disposition terms to create a larger set of 562 terms that better resembled the American variable selection. Sixty-two terms that had elicited no response among at least 15 of the original participants, suggesting relative unfamiliarity, were eliminated to arrive at a set comparable in size to the American set. Coordinates for the Big Five personality factors in this data set were provided by 100 adjectives (20 for each factor) that were identified as having the highest loadings on the Big Five by Ostendorf (1990a, Tables 52 through 56) were used.

The second part of the study by Saucier et al. (1999) was a subcomponent-comparison study. A sample of German – English bilinguals who were able to compare the subcomponents from American and German data without translation were recruited to avoid the difficult issues associated with translation. Twenty-two raters fluent in both German and English, 11 from the United States and 11 from Germany were recruited. There were 9 female and 13 male judges. The average age was 28 years. Fourteen judges were natives of Germany. The German natives had spent an average of 9 years learning English and the nonnatives reported an average of 6 years learning German. All of the German-native judges had lived at least 6 months in an English-speaking country and the other judges had spent at least 2 years living in a German-speaking country. The raters were presented with forms containing instructions in both English and German. For each promax factor, the 6 English (or 6 German) adjectives having the highest loadings were provided. The judges were instructed to indicate which English cluster provided the best match to each German cluster and to rate the relative closeness (1 = weak, 2 = moderate, 3 = very close) of the match they had made.

Another study, by Goldberg (1990), assessed the validity of the Big Five by establishing short sets of adjectives that are equally dispersed among the Big Five factors. Goldberg completed a set of three tests in order to find "markers" for the Big Five. The first study was

based on the self-reports of an 8 step rotating scale performed by 187 college students. The terms obtained 75-scale scores/subject. When the overloads were calculated, the terms were categorized into the 5 factors. Study two obtained samples through self and peer evaluated reports. In the third study, Goldberg established a set of 100 clusters from the previous study as markers for the Big Five.

Later, in 1992, Goldberg tested 35 bipolar scales, however these did not compare well to the results of the 100 unipolar markers (Saucier, 1994). Therefore, in a study performed by Gerard Saucier (1994), Saucier set out to establish a new, valid set of "mini-markers". The mini-markers were partly established as an effort to correct some of the problems in the larger inventory scale, such as: the moderately high interscale correlations, to compensate for some of the "user-unfriendly" terms found in Goldberg's scale.

Using Goldberg's set of 100 terms, Saucier (1994) selected terms on the basis of the factor purity for each of the terms. This brief set underwent factor analysis, reliability analysis, and comparisons to factors from the set of the 100 markers. Eight terms were selected for each of the Big Five markers, totaling 40 "mini-markers". A slight revision of the new set was made in order to reduce the number of terms beginning with the prefix "un". Root negotiation pairs were reduced from 9 sets to 6. The set also attempted to contain roughly the same amount of socially desirable terms and socially undesirable adjectives. All 40 items load highest on the expected Big Five factor. The factors that scored highest were more than double the second highest loading, which fulfills the definition of factor purity.

Since shorter scales typically have lower reliability, their validity is often limited. As a result of these improvements, the mini-markers reliability approximated that of the longer version. Using the shorter scale can save time and money, while yielding comparable results. The current study was designed to assess the concurrent validity of the brief mini-markers inventory. The 40-item mini-markers scale and a 15-item situational response questionnaire were administered to a sample of college students. It was hypothesized that scores on the mini-marker factors would correlate highly with responses to situations tapping the relevant factors of personality.

METHODS

A questionnaire consisting of the Mini Markers Scale (Saucier, 1994) and an author-devised survey assessing substance abuse behavior and attitudes was administered to 117 college students, aged 18 to 22, enrolled in an introductory psychology course. Of the total, 27 were male, mean age 19.44 and 87 were female, mean age 18.98. The Mini Markers Scale consists of 40 trait adjectives (8 measuring each of the Big Five personality factors). Subjects are asked to indicate the degree to which they possess each trait, using a Likert scale (1=extremely inaccurate, 2=very inaccurate, 3=moderately inaccurate, 4=slightly inaccurate, 5=?, 6=slightly accurate, 7=moderately accurate, 8= very accurate, 9=extremely accurate).

The author-devised survey was comprised of a total of 15 Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree) situational items, three items for each of the Big Five personality factors. An example for Conscientiousness was "I try my best to keep good, organized class notes." One of the items for Extraversion was "I am involved in a large number of campus group activities." The items for Agreeableness included "I am happy to go along with someone else's plans." For Intellectance, "I intentionally try something new every

semester" was one of the items used. "After handing in an exam, I continue to dwell on my performance" is a sample item for Neuroticism.

RESULTS

Directionally adjusted items were totaled to create summary scores for each of the five basic personality factors (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and intellectance) for each participant. Scores on the agreeableness factor were significantly correlated with those on all of the other four factors (extraversion, $r=.36$, $p<.01$; neuroticism, $r=-.22$, $p<.01$; conscientiousness, $r=.39$, $p<.01$; intellectance, $r=.31$, $p<.01$). Conscientiousness and extraversion were significantly associated ($r=.20$, $p<.05$), as were intellectance and extraversion ($r=.20$, $p<.05$).

The three situational items designed to tap the Conscientiousness factor were all found to have significant correlations with scores on this factor ($r=.49$;.37; and .48, $p<.01$). Scores on one of these items ("I try my best to keep good, organized class notes") were also significantly associated with scores on Agreeableness ($r=.19$, $p<.05$).

Similarly, two of the situational items designed to tap Extraversion were found to be significantly correlated with scores on this factor ($r=.33$; .38, $p<.01$). The remaining situational item intended to assess Extraversion ("When I am alone in my dorm room I quickly get bored") failed to correlate significantly with scores on that factor (or any others).

One item created to assess Agreeableness ("I am happy to go along with someone else's plans") was significantly correlated ($r=.28$, $p<.01$) with scores on this factor, but also correlated significantly ($r=.23$, $p<.05$) with Conscientiousness. A second item measuring Agreeableness ("It takes a lot to get me angry") was found to be signficantly correlated ($r=.21$, $p<.05$) with both the intended factor score and Neuroticiam ($r=-.34$, $p<.01$). A final Agreeableness item ("I would try to punish a roommate who had been unfair to me") did not correlate with any of the factors, including Agreeableness.

Only one situational item intended to assess Intellectance ("I intentionally try something new every semester") was significantly correlated with scores on this factor ($r=.32$, $p<.01$); it also was correlated ($r=.25$, $p<.01$) with Extraversion. The remaining two items designed to tap the Intellectance variable did not significantly correlate with Intellectance, but one did correlate ($r=.21$, $p<.05$) with Extraversion and the other had a correlation of -.19, ($p<.05$) with Agreeableness.

The one situational item designed to tap Neuroticism that correlated significantly with scores on that factor ("After handing I an exam, I continue to dwell on my performance", $r=.21$, $p<.05$) did not correlate with any of the other four factors. Of the two situational items that failed to correlate with Neuroticism, one correlated ($r=.20$, $p<.05$) with the Extraversion factor and the other was associated with scores on the Intellectance factor ($r=.18$, $p<.05$).

One situational item ("I am involved in a large number of campus group activities") that was significantly associated with the Extraversion factor was also significantly correlated with Agreeableness ($r=.27$, $p<.01$) and with Conscientiousness ($r=.22$, $p<.05$).

DISCUSSION

It appears that although the five personality factors are conceptualized as being largely discrete, independent dimensions, in this sample significant overlap among these dimensions was noted. This may reflect an actual lack of orthogonality, or may be attributable to response biases among the respondents in this study. It is possible that students who describe themselves in more positive social terms (i.e., as being highly agreeable) are more likely to attribute other socially desirable characteristics to them. Among college students, extraversion, low neuroticism, conscientiousness, and intellectance are likely to be seen as socially desirable.

The concurrent validity of the Mini Markers personality questionnaire was affirmed for Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness. All three items designed to tap the dimension of Conscientiousness were highly correlated with the Conscientiousness factor score. The distinctiveness of this factor was supported by the finding that two of these situational items were not significantly correlated with any other factor score. The third item was significantly correlated with Agreeableness, which seemed to be associated with responses to several of the situational items. This seems to be due to the operation of social desirability across many of author-devised situational items. The Extraversion scale was predictive of responses to two of the three situational items. The one item which failed to validate the Extraversion scale may have been conceptually flawed, because it assumed that social stimuli would be unavailable in students' dorm rooms. In actuality, thanks to the ubiquity of computers and the Internet, being alone in one's dorm room no loner isolates a person from social stimulation. Two of the three situational items designed to validate the Agreeableness scale were significantly correlated with this factor.

The concurrent validities for the Intellectance and Neuroticism factors were not established so convincingly by this data. Only one of the situational items for Intellectance was significantly correlated with the factor score. The other two items did not significantly correlate with Intellectance, but did significantly correlate with two other factors, one with Extraversion and one with Agreeableness. The items for Neuroticism showed similar results. One item significantly correlated with Neuroticism factor scores; the remaining two did not. Instead, one significantly correlated with Extraversion and one with Intellectance.

Further attempts to test the concurrent validity of the Mini Markers personality questionnaire should be made by reviewing and revising the items used in the present. Use of additional validation resources is suggested for future inquiry into the validity of the Intellectance and Neuroticism factor scales.

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	Intended Scale (r)	Other Sign Scale (r)
1. I often find it difficult to get a good night's sleep the night before a test. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	N ns	E(.20)*
2. When I am alone in my dorm room, I quickly get bored. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	E ns	ns
3. I intentionally try something new every semester. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	I(.32)**	E(.25)**
4. I try my best to keep good organized class notes. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	C(.49)**	A(.19)*
5. I would try to punish a roommate who had been unfair to me. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	A ns	ns
6. When I am well prepared for an exam, I stay relaxed while taking it. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	N ns	I(.18)*
7. After handing in an exam, I continue to dwell on my performance. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	N(.21)*	ns
8. I would feel comfortable being on stage in a campus theater production. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	E(.33)**	I(.22)*
9. I am involved in a large number of campus group activities. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	E(.38)**	A(.27)**C(.22)*
10. I have studied abroad or would like to. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	I ns	E(.21)*
11. I don't like to waste my time listening to opinions that differ from my own. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	I ns	A(-.19)*
12. It would bother me if I were late for an appointment. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	C(.37)**	ns
13. I don't mind if my room is a mess. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	C(-.48)**	ns
14. It takes a lot to get me angry. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	A(.21)*	N(-.34)**
15. I am happy to go along with someone else's plans. a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Disagree d) Strongly Disagree	A(.28)**	C(.23)*

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$

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